



**Summary of instructions contained in
the “Staff Manual” of the Imperial
Record Department for the storage,
preservation, repair and destruction
of records**

*(See Resolution 9 of the 13th Session
of the Indian Historical Records
Commission, 1930.)*

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Summary of instructions contained in the "Staff Manual" of the Imperial Record Department for the storage, preservation, repair and destruction of records.

The building in which records are stored should be of brick, if possible with concrete floors. The floors should be coal-tarred, or washed with some chemical preparation so as to guard against the ravages of white-ants and insects.

It should be well-lighted and as far as possible impervious to dust and damp.

The best precautions which local conditions admit should be taken against fire. In order to guard against cases of emergency, fire appliances such as "The Tropical Fire King" and the like should be posted at intervals against the walls of the record rooms and bottles of handfire-grenade and buckets full of water should be kept at convenient places in the premises ready for use. Combustible materials should not be allowed to lie about nor should smoking be permitted in or near the record rooms.

The walls of the building should be fitted with open racks, preferably of iron. Where wooden racks are used, they should be wiped very thinly with a rag soaked in creosote once a year. Care should be taken to rub the shelves dry with cotton waste or any other similar material before replacing the records on them as creosote has a corrosive effect. The documents should also be frequently shifted and dusted.

The records of each department should be kept separate and in each department, the Company and Crown portions as well as different branches should be kept separate. In each branch or department bound volumes should be put first and bundles of loose papers next. The miscellaneous records should come at the end of the regular series. Each collection should have its own series of numbers. Records should be catalogued as soon as possible with a table of contents and an index.

Original papers, proceedings and all loose papers should be kept in bundles between boards (some special records in pamphlet boxes) bearing labels, showing the departments to which they belong, what they are, and their date.

Documents bearing seals or like impressions and large maps and plans, which are likely to get damaged if kept in bundles should be preserved in pamphlet boxes, their place in the bundles being taken by empty docket covers containing an indication as to where the papers have been removed.

The original consultations and other loose papers should be arranged according to their dates and numbers and tied between two boards; no bundles should be more than 10 to 12 inches deep, including the boards. On the upper board should be pasted a label showing the department and the contents of the bundle. Those original consultations which are very much larger than the average should be placed by themselves between specially big boards. Their absence from the smaller bundles should be noted on a label for that purpose which should be pasted on the upper board of the small bundles. The same applies to unflattened original consultations which have to be withdrawn from the old small bundles, repaired, etc., before they can be sent out on requisition. These, when returned, *should not be folded and replaced* in the small bundles; they should be placed flat between large boards, their absence being noted on a label, as before. The bundle when ready should be placed in its appropriate rack and shelf and the list corrected, if necessary.

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Company papers when not bound were usually folded several times and tied in small bundles. They are now flattened and each separate document is sewn into a thick paper cover. Many need repairing before this can be done, being worn or badly creased by folding, sometimes even torn or decaying. They are repaired with *chiffon* (white muslin may be used in the case of the less important document) and pale buff hand-made paper as used by His Majesty's Records Office in London or strong machine made paper, and with these only. Dextrine paste as supplied by the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works should be used for the purpose. This is prepared according to the formula supplied by the Imperial Record Department. The general principle should be to preserve as far as possible the original condition and appearance of a paper and only to repair it when it is absolutely necessary in order to keep the paper from decaying or tearing further.

Every manuscript must be cleaned and pressed; that is, all the creases must be flattened out and all traces of dirt removed. If the paper is very dirty, put it in water and leave it for two or three minutes. If the paper has not lost all its strength and become soft and mouldy or too brittle to be handled with safety, it can be rubbed gently with a brush and soap. Manuscripts of which the ink is at all likely to run must never be rubbed. On removing the paper from the water (if no old patches are to be taken off), place it between two sheets of blotting paper slowly, evenly and gently, thereby getting rid of the surplus moisture. While the paper is still moist place it between two pulp-boards, a single sheet between two boards. If the paper is not too wet and has been allowed to lie for a little while, the pulp-board will absorb all the moisture that remains. The papers that are to be dried can be left in the flattening press overnight, being taken out next day, when they should be found perfectly flat and ready for repair.

Manuscripts that do not need washing but only the elimination of the creases should be placed between damp sheets of Serampore paper, one sheet of paper, one manuscript, another sheet of paper, another manuscript a third sheet of paper, a third manuscript, and so on in a pile. After three or four hours they can be taken out and placed between pulp-boards as above. Next day they will be ready for the daftari to work upon.

When dry, the papers are ready to be sewn into a cover or, if necessary, repaired. Single sheets should be mounted on a guard of new papers, and through the guard the thread passes which holds it into the cover. Collections of single sheets are to be made up into pairs by means of guards, and the thread is to be passed through the fold of the guard. If there is too much writing to allow of the document being repaired with paper, or if the whole is brittle, it may be covered with chiffon on both sides. Chiffon must never be left exposed, that is, unbacked by paper; by itself it has not sufficient strength and may fray and tear. So that if it is stretched across large holes in a document a fresh piece of paper, slightly larger than the whole, must be pasted over it. Small occasional holes are of no consequence.

Documents badly patched either with paper or tracing-paper are best left to soak in a bath of water for an hour or more until the old patches are loose enough to be lifted at the corner with a bone paper knife and drawn off. The documents may then be repaired with handmade paper or chiffon according to the condition of the documents. But always avoid putting a new patch on top of an old one.

Shortly after they are repaired, before the paste gets dry, the papers should be placed in the press between two sheets of oiled paper, (the press being slightly tightened and not screwed down), and left there until they are dry. But where chiffon has been used, place the paper between two sheets of oiled paper as well as two pulp-boards and press them for say, fifteen minutes; then take off the sheets of oiled paper and again place the document between two pulp-boards, under very slight pressure, until dry. These sheets of oiled paper are to be constantly washed and kept clean of paste and ink stains.

The broad principle observed in eliminating records is that no papers, which are likely to be of any value, at any time, should be destroyed, nor those retained which have ceased to be useful for any purpose whatsoever, and unnecessarily encumber the record shelves. In the former category are included all important documents, including those of historical and legal value or those possessing personal or antiquarian interest. All other documents of unimportant or routine nature may be destroyed.

A hand-list should be prepared of the records that are permanently preserved.

A proper check should be kept on the issue and return of the records.